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SUBJECT: GUIDANCE: MIDDLE EAST BRIEFING, JUNE 26

¶1. (U) This is an action message. USUN is authorized to draw from the points in para 2 below during the Middle East Briefing scheduled for June 26. Please see septel for further guidance in the event an Arab Group draft resolution is tabled.

¶2. (U) Begin points:

-- I would like to thank Under-Secretary Pascoe for Today's briefing on the situation in the Middle East. I would like to make five points with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and then turn to the situation in Lebanon.

-- First, achieving a peaceful, two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a paramount priority and we remain committed to achieving a peace agreement before the end of the year. Secretary Rice's monthly trips to the region reflects her personal commitment to this issue.

-- We believe the ongoing bilateral talks are the most serious the parties have had for some time, touching on all of the core issues. The talks are difficult, as one would expect, and due to their private nature progress may not be visible, but that should not be mistaken for a lack of progress.

-- The Quartet, which just met in Berlin on June 24, continues to play a key role supporting the parties' efforts and coordinating international engagement. When it meets again in September at the General Assembly, it will consider the timing and agenda of an international meeting in Moscow to lend support to the process launched in Annapolis.

-- Separately, Israel and Syria are conducting indirect peace talks under the auspices of Turkey. We hope that these talks will be a forum to raise the breadth of Syria's activities of concern, such as its support for terrorist groups and its facilitation of foreign fighters entering Iraq. We will continue to focus on the Israeli-Palestinian track.

-- Second, Palestinian capacity building is key to the success of this process. The Palestinian Authority remains in dire straits financially, facing a projected budget deficit of over \$500 million in 2008. The U.S. is making every effort to channel assistance to them. We have already delivered on much of our \$555 million pledge made in Paris last December, including \$150 million in direct budgetary assistance. We would urge others, especially regional partners, to increase their efforts to support the PA.

-- Third, we are working hard to support the parties' efforts to improve security for both Palestinians and Israelis, and economic and humanitarian conditions for the Palestinians. Secretary Rice is deeply involved in this process. On June 16, she held another trilateral meeting with Prime Minister Fayyad and Minister of Defense Barak. These meetings have begun to yield tangible results.

-- Israel's removal of some significant West Bank checkpoints, the opening of a number of Palestinian police stations in Area B and issuance of work permits to Palestinians represent positive steps. Similarly, PA security forces have deployed to Jenin in coordination with Israeli authorities and are working to uphold law and order and crack down on terrorism.

-- A just-concluded conference in Berlin has focused renewed international attention on the Palestinian police and justice sector and resulted in pledges to disburse \$242 million in these areas and the Quartet has called for speedy implementation of these projects. We congratulate the German government on the success of this conference.

-- Fourth, we remain committed to a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. We will never abandon the people of Gaza. We support continuing Egyptian efforts to restore calm to Gaza and southern Israel and welcomed the period of calm that began on June 19.

-- We deplore the rocket and mortar attacks of June 24th from Gaza into southern Israel that shattered that calm, and join with Prime Minister Fayyad in condemning these attacks.

-- We condemn ongoing effort by Hamas and other groups to usurp violently the lawful authority of the Palestinian government in Gaza. Hamas can be part of that peaceful process by accepting the principles outlined by the Quartet: renunciation of violence and terror, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements between the parties, including the Roadmap.

-- We welcome the European Union's offer to resume its monitoring mission at the Rafah crossing, and we support steady and sufficient supplies of fuel to Gaza and the immediate resumption of UN and other donor projects there.

-- Fifth, we reiterate our deep concern at continuing Israeli settlement activity, and call on Israel to stop all such activity, and dismantle outposts erected since March 2001. Secretary Rice reaffirmed this position most recently in her visit to Jerusalem on June 16. This obligation is clearly stated in the Roadmap, along with security and other obligations incumbent on the Palestinians and other parties.

(IF NEEDED IF LIBYA TABLES A UNSCR): The best way to address adherence by both sides to Roadmap obligations, including Palestinian obligations to dismantle the terrorist infrastructure and Israeli obligations to halt settlement activity, is through bilateral negotiations. We do not believe Security Council action will help move the bilateral negotiations forward - rather, it could harden positions on both sides and make it harder to reach compromise. The Quartet, significantly, did not call for Security Council action in its meeting only two days ago.

-- Turning to Lebanon, the United States views full implementation of the Doha Agreement and UN Security Council Resolutions 1559 and 1701 as essential to safeguard Lebanon's independence and security and allow its people to participate in the political process without fear. We call on all parties to support Prime Minister Siniora's efforts to establish a National Unity Government as soon as possible.

-- We are deeply concerned by recent acts of violence in Tripoli and other parts of Lebanon. We call upon the opposition, in particular, to refrain from the use of violence to promote its ends, as stipulated in the Doha Agreement. We also call on outside parties, especially Syria and Iran, to cease arming illegal militias in Lebanon.

-- At the same time, we strongly support efforts of the

Lebanese Armed Forces and Internal Security Forces to restore calm. The international community must stand with Lebanon's legitimate government in insisting on the authority of the state and the illegitimacy of militias such as Hizballah that seek to undermine that authority in defiance of this Council.

-- As Secretary Rice stated on her recent visit to Beirut, full implementation of all aspects of UN Security Council Resolution 1701 is a key priority for the United States, and we look forward to the Secretary General's upcoming report on this matter. Progress on Sheba'a Farms, the full delineation of Lebanon's border with Syria, compliance with the arms embargo, disarmament of armed militias and the other provisions -- as well as those of Council resolutions 1559, 1680, and 1757 -- deserve the strong support the UN and international community. We strongly support the work of UNIIIC and look forward to the establishment of a Special Tribunal for Lebanon.

End points.

13. (U) Septel provides points for like-minded Council members in seeking to delay consideration of the Arab Group draft, and additional elements for inclusion in that draft if delay is not possible.
RICE